

SPECIAL MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

March 5, 2012

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Mansfield Middle School.

I. PUBLIC HEARING – School Building Project

Mayor Paterson welcomed those present and introduced Council members, staff and consultants joining her on stage. Present were Councilors Keane, Lindsey, Moran, Paterson, Paulhus, Ryan, Schaefer and Shapiro; Staff members Town Manager Matt Hart, Director of Finance Cherie Trahan, Director of Planning Linda Painter, and Director of Facilities Bill Hammon; and Consultants Tom DiMauro of Newfield Construction Inc, and Richard Lawrence of Lawrence Associates. The Town Council voted at their February 21, 2012 meeting to bring a preliminary recommendation of two new schools for a total of 750 students to public hearing. The Council vote was six in favor and three opposed. Mayor Paterson reviewed the guidelines for the public hearing, noting all questions will be addressed on the Town's website. Town Clerk Mary Stanton read the legal notice.

On behalf of the Council, Town Manager Matt Hart presented information regarding the existing facts, the project's progress, and some of the key advantages and cost projections for the preliminary Town Council's recommendation of two new schools and renovations to the Mansfield Middle School. Councilor Denise Keane presented a minority response in support of Option A baseline, describing the project plans, cost and sustainability reasons to support renovations to the schools. (Presentations attached)

Ann Kouatly, Fern Road, congratulated the Town Council for initiating this study and urged citizens to review the extensive school building material posted on the Towns' website. Ms. Kouatly spoke in support of one school and asked the Council to allow the citizens to choose among the three school building options, one school, two schools or renovations.

Bill Caneira, Candide Lane, thanked the Council for holding this public hearing and urged support for the Vinton School site.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, asked the Council to be cognizant of the effect a loss of a school will have on property owners and spoke in support of renovations. (Statement attached)

David Freudmann, Eastwood Road, urged the Council to be mindful of the current debt even without the school project.

Randy Walikonis, Mansfield City Road, spoke in support of the 2 school option, commenting the maintenance and energy requirements of 3 older schools would be prohibitive and the cost difference between the options is not that much.

Katherine Paulhus, Middle Turnpike, spoke in support of the renovation of the 3 current schools and urged, if 2 schools are chosen, one be in the north section of Town.

Margaret Rubega, South Eagleville Road, spoke in support of the 2 school option expressing her concerns that when the Town experiences a drop in school enrollment it will not make economic or educational sense to retain all 3 schools.

Richard Cowles Meadowood Road, was appalled at the suggestions to tear down 3 schools to build 2 new ones. (Statement attached)

March 5, 2012

Christopher Lapsis, Candide Lane, expressed concerns with the plan to build new schools fearing a loss of the sense of pride in the neighborhood schools and the historical and sustainability benefits the Town would realize by retaining the existing 3 schools. (Statement attached)

Larry Lombard, Pleasant Valley Road, spoke in support of the 3 school option.

Alex Marcellino, Davis Road, expressed support for the 2 school option noting the renovation project does not include the replacement of the portables and questioned the notion of existing neighborhood schools as his son currently travels 45 minutes to school.

Carol Lewis, Hillyndale Road, addressed the affect the quality of education has on home values and urged support for an energy efficient school building project, not a cheap project.

Lisa Eaton, Lorraine Drive, spoke in support of Option A baseline remarking now is not the time to incur more debt we should wait to see the impact of the Storrs Center Project.

Pat Suprenant, Gurleyville Road, stated buildings do not educate teachers do and believes the case for the 2 school option has not been made. (Statement attached)

Bill Thompson, Summit Road, lives in a home built in 1715 and supports the use of solar panels regardless of which option is chosen.

Brian Anderson, Ridge Road, spoke in support of the 2 school recommendation and believes it would be a mistake to renovate because schools need to be functional.

Howard Raphaelson, Timber Drive, spoke in favor of the 1 school option and the use of team teaching which would be accommodated in a large facility.

Jessica Higham, Adeline Place, voiced her support for the 2 school option noting the recommendations from the League of Women Voter and the Mansfield Advocates for Children. This option would save on the operating budgets.

Cristina Semenza, Woods Road, stated this is not the right time for the proposed building project and believes everyone supports their neighborhood schools.

Charles Dainton, Mansfield City Road, urged the Council to set aside money for ongoing major maintenance. (Statement attached)

Jay Rueckl, South Eagleville Road, stated the current schools are not designed for modern education and the cost difference between the options over 23 years is not that significant.

Peter Millman, Dog Lane, spoke in support of the 2 school option because the current schools no longer work as educational tools and the price difference between the options is minimal.

Alison Hilding, Southwood Road, expressed her support for renovation commenting that it is the least expensive and best educational option. (Statement attached)

Paula Newman, Storrs Road, presented random thoughts for consideration including the addition of solar panels to the renovated schools and the elimination of Southeast School if Option C is chosen.

Mary Hirsch, Courtyard, expressed her support for the 2 school option and does not feel that students are concerned with time spent in transit and would prefer new construction to putting band-aids on the current schools.

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road expressed appreciation for the process commenting that he originally supported renovations but now feels two new schools will cost less and best for children.

Martha Kelly, Bundy Lane, spoke in support of renovations due to the economic state and the expensive new projects that the town is undertaking at this time. (Statement attached)

Marie Cantino, Dog Lane, expressed her support for 2 schools to insure quality education for future generations and energy savings.

Art Smith, Mulberry Road, questioned whether we have documentation which shows our schools are not safe. (Statement attached)

Peggy Becker-Rinker, Hillside Circle expressed that the town has done a wonderful job but the current schools are inadequate to provide educational opportunities.(Statement attached)

April Holinko, Middle Turnpike, read a statement from Patricia Ausburger. (Statement attached)

John Schwoerer, Woodland Road, voiced support for Option A renovations noting that if we wait eight years the town would be able to qualify for the 72 percent reimbursement rate.

Jim Stearns, Stearns Road, expressed his belief that new buildings are not as well built and that smaller is better for younger children. Mr. Stearns supports renovations.

Henry Krisch, Farmstead Road, spoke in support of the 2 school option as the best investment in the future of our children.

Holly Matthews, Storrs Heights Road, questioned how the town will sustain the education budget, given the cost of declining enrollments.

Stacy Geist, Oak Drive, urged the Council to retain the three neighborhood schools.

Mark LaPlaca, Jonathan Lane and Mansfield Board of Education Chair, began the process as a reluctant supporter of the 2 school option but due to the operational savings and the projected declining enrollments believes that this is the best option. Mr. LaPlaca would prefer to concentrate on educational opportunities rather than on keeping 3 schools.

Mayor Paterson thanked everyone for their participation. Council members encouraged residents to forward any additional comments to them and thanked everyone for the civility shown throughout the public hearing.

II. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Paulhus moved and Ms. Keane seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 P.M. Motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth C. Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

March 5, 2012